

April 28, 2006

## USAID/CAR Bi-weekly Report

### Regional

#### **World Bank's Doing Business Report Identifies Necessary Reforms for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan**

Kyrgyz Republic was ranked 84<sup>th</sup>, Kazakhstan 86<sup>th</sup>, and Uzbekistan 138<sup>th</sup> among 155 countries, based on specific regulations that promote or constrain investment productivity and growth, as measured by ten comparable indicators. These rankings were introduced on April 18 in Kyrgyzstan and April 19 in Kazakhstan to representatives of government, private sector, academia, donors, and media gathered at conferences that presented the *Doing Business in 2006: Creating Jobs* report, prepared by the World Bank. USAID, through its Participant Training Program, implemented by the Academy for Educational Development, was one of the major sponsors of the event.



*In Kyrgyzstan, the Doing Business conference was attended by more than 150 business and government representatives.*

*Photo: AED*

The report points out that some of the immediate reforms needed in Kyrgyzstan include simplifying regulation of cross border trade, reducing the time for contract enforcement, easing the burden of taxation, and streamlining procedures for obtaining construction permits. In Kazakhstan, some of the immediate reforms identified by the report include simplification of procedures for issuing licenses, and registering property and land, trading, and investor protection. USAID will use the report to guide its assistance programs to improve business climate, create new jobs, and fight poverty.

### Kazakhstan

#### **USAID Assists Kazakhstan to Prepare Avian Influenza (AI) Response Measures**

Representatives of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, sanitary epidemiological departments, and veterinary departments from all oblasts on April 12 and 13 attended a second of the three seminars on Avian Influenza. The workshop, titled "Monitoring of Epidemiological Situation and Response Measures to Outbreaks of Avian Influenza" was organized by the Republican Sanitary Epidemiological Service (RSES) and was financed through a grant from the Asian Development Bank. USAID, in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), assisted the RSES in developing an implementation plan for the grant and is supporting its execution. CDC presented to the workshop participants an overview of the AI situation in the world, response measures, and laboratory diagnosis of the disease. A graduate from the USAID Applied Epidemiology Training Program presented results of the AI outbreak investigation in Pavlodar Oblast.

AI presents a serious health risk in Kazakhstan, which is crossed by three major flyways of migratory birds. The country so far has had two AI outbreaks among birds, in Pavlodar Oblast in July 2005 and in Mangistau Oblast in March 2006.

#### **With USAID Support Kazakhstan Adopts Live Birth Definition**

On March 1, 2006, the Government of Kazakhstan endorsed a plan for the country's transition to the live birth criteria, recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). Nationwide registration of newborns according to the new criteria will start in January 2008. The application of these criteria will

enable Kazakhstan to compare its statistics with other countries and, in turn, will improve medical interventions to reduce infant mortality. Representatives from USAID, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), UNICEF, and WHO have been invited to participate in a Ministry of Health's commission that oversees the introduction of the criteria nationally. USAID will also provide training of trainers on the new criteria to support the transition.

USAID, through a partnership with CDC, has been assisting the Government of Kazakhstan to introduce the WHO criteria since 2002. With USAID support, a pilot model was developed and implemented in ten maternity houses in Almaty City and Oblast. All newborns weighing 500 grams and with 22 weeks of gestation (instead of the 1000 grams and 28 weeks that was required under the former system) were registered as births. Due to the initiative, the official statistic for infant mortality in pilot facilities has increased at least twice, compelling the facilities to make important changes to improve maternal and newborn care. USAID also helped revise some regulatory and reporting documents and provided training to the pilot staff.



*The new criteria recognize all newborns weighing 500 grams and with 22 weeks of gestation as births.*  
Photo: CDC

### **USAID Helps Increase Transparency in the Administration of Justice in Kazakhstan**

Earlier this month, USAID's Kazakhstan Judicial Assistance Project held a workshop to demonstrate the new court recoding system, piloted at the Bostandyk District Court in Almaty. The new system will enable the court to have a verbatim record of trial events, replacing hand-written summaries that are still typically done in most of the Kazakhstan courts. This will significantly improve the quality of the records, eliminate the potential for manipulation, and increase judicial transparency and accountability. The demonstration, which was attended by the Chief Justice and other senior members of the judiciary, received broad media coverage and generated interest in other courts.

Upgrading court recording systems is only one of several aspects of the judicial system reform, supported by USAID at the request of the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan. The project also includes a public awareness campaign to educate Kazakh citizens on the judicial system, training for the media and judiciary to improve reporting of judicial issues, training of sitting judges, and assistance in strengthening the judicial ethics code. These USAID-supported activities contribute to the realization of a transparent and accountable judicial system in Kazakhstan, and support the country's further integration into the global legal community.

### **First Televised Public Forum on Bribery and Corruption in Legal Education in Kazakhstan**

With USAID funding, ABA/CEELI and USAID's Participant Training Program conducted a televised forum to address the issue of bribery in law institutions in Kazakhstan. The one hour talk show was broadcast by Channel 31 nationwide on April 23 and April 29, and focused on bribery in law faculties. The show brought together legal experts, law faculty professors, law students, and university administration to discuss the prevalence of bribery in educational institutions and the reasons behind it, and to work out recommendations on possible ways to combat it. The law students and legal professionals present in the studio commented on both the prevalence of bribery and the detrimental effects that it has on the legal system of



*The talk show discussed corruption and its reasons.*  
Photo: AED



Kazakhstan. This program follows on ABA/CEELI's broadcast (co-funded by USAID) of a mock trial of a bribery case in November, also broadcast on Channel 31. These are some of the first programs intended to attract public attention to the sensitive issue of bribery and its impact on civil society.

## Kyrgyzstan

### USAID Helps Kyrgyz National University Hold its First Public Hearing

For the first time in the history of the country's higher education system, the Kyrgyz National University held a public hearing on its annual budget on April 19. At the university request, USAID's Local Government Initiative Project, Implemented by the Urban Institute, supported the hearing, which gathered more than 100 participants from the university administration, faculty, and student body, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the State Anti-Monopoly Agency, and the Parliament. In preparation for the event, the USAID project provided training on organizing a hearing and on the planned budget for the university's administration, teaching staff, and students. The project also worked with the administration to produce a budget-in-brief document for public distribution (it can be viewed at [www.ui.kg](http://www.ui.kg)). According to the University Rector Boljurova, "This is the first step toward accountability and financial transparency [of the education system] and also I understand this as an anti-corruption activity of the university administration."



*Students took active part in the hearing.  
Photo: Urban Institute*

The Local Government Initiative Project works with local governments in 25 pilot sites across Kyrgyzstan to introduce public hearings and improve asset management, planning, budgeting, and citizen participation.

### USAID-Supported Local Testing NGO Wins World Bank Contracts

The Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods (CEATM), established with USAID's support to run the Kyrgyz National Scholarship Testing Initiative, recently was selected to implement two World Bank education assessments. The first study is the Program for International Students Assessment, an international student survey, allows a comparative analysis of educational achievement in the areas of math, science, and reading across 58 countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The second study, the National Sample Based Assessment, evaluates the achievement of students in grades four and eight in various academic subjects including science, math, and reading. The assessments will be a key tool for the general public, educators, and policymakers to make informed decisions about education policy and priorities in Kyrgyzstan.



*The National Scholarship Test was administered at over 80 sites across Kyrgyzstan in 2005.  
Photo: CEATM*

The Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods (CEATM) is an indigenous testing organization established by USAID in 2004 to design and administer standardized tests under USAID's National Scholarship Testing Initiative. Annually, the initiative provides a transparent and fair way for over 30,000 high-school graduates across Kyrgyzstan to compete for more than 5,000 government-provided scholarships at colleges and universities.



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

## Tajikistan

### USAID-supported Economic Opportunity Center Celebrates its One Year Anniversary

The Isfara City Economic Opportunity Center, established by the USAID Alternatives to Conflict in Tajikistan (ACT) Project, celebrated its one year anniversary this month and is currently working towards becoming self-sustainable. The USAID project, implemented by CHF International, operates two such centers in Isfara and Istravshan districts in the remote Sughd Region, which is plagued with a particularly high level of unemployment and outward labor migration. Since their opening, the two centers have already helped more than 800 youth find permanent jobs. Over 2,500 unemployed youth have applied to the Economic Opportunity Centers, and more than 60% of them benefited from the trainings and apprenticeships. The centers work with local businesses to create additional jobs; offer youth various vocational and soft skills trainings; and organize consultations on job-hunting, resume writing, and interview skills to increase youth's chances of securing employment.



*Trainings and apprenticeships through the ACT programs help participants gain valuable skills to enter the workforce.*

*Photo: ACT*

Unemployment is a serious problem in Tajikistan. Every year, almost one million Tajik men find seasonal jobs in Russia and in Kazakhstan. By creating opportunities for at-risk youth to channel their energies into productive endeavors, USAID's Alternatives to Conflict in Tajikistan Project helps to reduce social conflict and labor migration.

## Uzbekistan

### Uzbekistan's Credit Unions Continue Growing

As of March 31, 2006, the 18 USAID-supported credit unions reported 8 billion Uzbek Soums (approximately \$6.6 million) in assets. Their deposits and share payments total 6.75 billion Soums, while the sum of issued credits is an estimated 6.8 billion Soums (approximately \$5.6 million). These figures were announced by the Uzbekistan Credit Unions' Association, also supported by USAID, at a recent quarterly meeting of the heads of credit unions. Currently there are 28 credit unions with nearly 38,400 members in Uzbekistan, nearly a 200% increase since last year. The membership of the largest credit union, Sherdor, is nearly 5,000.



*Credit unions provide access to financing for thousands of small businesses in Uzbekistan.*

*Photo: WOCCU*

USAID has been supporting credit unions in Uzbekistan since the beginning of the credit union movement in 2002.

USAID's Development of Saving and Credit Unions Project, implemented by the World Council of Credit Unions, assisted in creating the credit unions, and continues to provide support to improve their services. Also, with USAID assistance, the Association of Credit Unions of Uzbekistan was formed in June 2005. The Association assists the development of legal documents to stimulate credit union activity and to train their staff.

